

# At a Glance

## “National Rankings Released” February 2012

Rankings are part of the American culture. Just look at the attention given to the weekly updates on national rankings in college athletics. This month two national rankings on public education were released:

- 17<sup>th</sup> edition of the American Legislative Exchange Council’s (ALEC) *Report Card on American Education*; and
- 16<sup>th</sup> edition of Education Week’s *Quality Counts 2012*.

The following analysis breaks down the rankings, highlighting the components of each report.

### **ALEC’s Report Card on American Education**

ALEC is a nonpartisan membership association for conservative state lawmakers. Annually, ALEC releases a report card that ranks states on their K-12 performance, progress, and reform. The 2012 rankings are based on the results of the 2011 administration of NAEP, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading and mathematics. NAEP is conducted periodically in mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, and U.S. history in all states and the District of Columbia to a random sample of students. NAEP is used to measure student performance across states. The full report can be downloaded at

[http://www.alec.org/docs/17thReportCard/ALECs\\_17th\\_Report\\_Card.pdf](http://www.alec.org/docs/17thReportCard/ALECs_17th_Report_Card.pdf).

First, South Carolina received an education policy grade of C+. This ranking is based upon the state’s academic standards; charter school policies; home school regulatory burdens; private school choice programs; teacher quality and policies; and online learning opportunities.

Second, out of 50 states and the District of Columbia, South Carolina received a ranking of 50<sup>th</sup> based on NAEP performance. The report measures the overall 2011 NAEP scores for gains as well as losses for students of various demographics and ethnicities between 2003 and 2011. ALEC denotes states that are in the “Hall of Fame” or the “Hall of Shame.” The “Hall of Shame” includes states that had student gains that were below half the national average while the “Hall of Fame” recognizes states with achievement gains which are at least double the national average.

Table 1 illustrates the student gains over time on NAEP in South Carolina as compared to the nation. Not all states are included in the rankings. Due to NAEP sampling procedures, some states do not have sufficient populations of students to make comparisons. For example, South Carolina has an insufficient Hispanic population in its NAEP scores. Other states had sampling errors when states systemically excluded certain types of students from testing.

**Table 1**  
Size of Gains for Students on NAEP  
4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading and Math Combined  
2003 through 2011

Students	South Carolina Gain or (Loss)	National Gains/Loss	South Carolina Ranking	Classification
White	+4	+16	33 out of 39	Hall of Shame
Hispanic	**	+32	**	
With Disabilities	-(44)	+18	40 out of 40	Hall of Shame
Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program General Education Students	+13	+33	32 out of 40	Hall of Shame

\*\* Too few Hispanics included in the sample

### **Quality Counts, 2012**

*Quality Counts 2012*, a publication of the education newspaper *Education Week*, focuses on the global challenges facing K-12 education. The report compares student achievement in the United States with other nations on international

assessments as well as policies on improving the quality of teaching. The result is that the United States continues to be in the “middle -of-the-pack” when compared to other nations. The report also includes the challenges facing all nations such as instructing immigrants and increasing the number of graduates ready for college or career. Overall, the United States received a grade of C. The full report is available at [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org).

As in prior years, *Quality Counts* also ranks individual states on the following indicators with examples of the statistics used:

- Chance for Success – Family income, parent education, preschool enrollment, NAEP 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Mathematics, high school graduation, etc.
- K-12 Achievement – NAEP Reading and Mathematics scores by demographics
- Standards, Assessments & Accountability –Standards that are course and grade-specific, supplementary resources, state assesses standards, holds schools accountable for performance, etc.
- Transitions & Alignment – Early childhood education, college and workforce readiness, etc.
- Teaching Profession – Licensure requirements, teacher evaluations, professional development, data system to monitor quality, etc.
- School Finance – Relationship between funding and local property wealth, amount of disparity in spending across districts, etc.

*Quality Counts* measures each state’s performance against these six indicators, assigning both a letter grade and a numerical score to each state. South Carolina’s scores are noted in Table 2 as well as comparable average national scores for each indicator. Overall, South Carolina ranked slightly above the national average. As compared to the prior year, South Carolina slipped nationally from 15<sup>th</sup> overall to 24<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states and the District of Columbia (Table 3).

**Table 2**

*Quality Counts 2012, Grading Summary, United States and South Carolina*

INDICATOR	Grade/Score	
	US	SC
<b>Overall</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C+</b>
Chance for Success	C+	C
K-12 Achievement	C-	D
Transitions & Alignment	C+	C-
School Finance	C	C-
Teaching Profession	C	B+
Standards, Assessments, and Accountability	B	A

**Table 3**

South Carolina Grades and Ranking, *Quality Counts* 2011 and 2012

INDICATOR	2011		2012	
	Grade	Ranking	Grade	Ranking
<b>Overall</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>24<sup>th</sup></b>
Chance for Success	C	39 <sup>th</sup>	C	38 <sup>th</sup>
K-12 Achievement	D-	45 <sup>th</sup>	D	45 <sup>th</sup>
Transitions and Alignment	C-	36 <sup>th</sup>	C-	36 <sup>th</sup>
School Finance	C-	29 <sup>th</sup>	C-	36 <sup>th</sup>
Teaching Profession	A	1 <sup>st</sup>	B+	1 <sup>st</sup>
Standards, Assessments, and Accountability	A	7 <sup>th</sup>	A	6 <sup>th</sup>